THE BOYS IN THE BAG BY HUNTER S. THOMPSON

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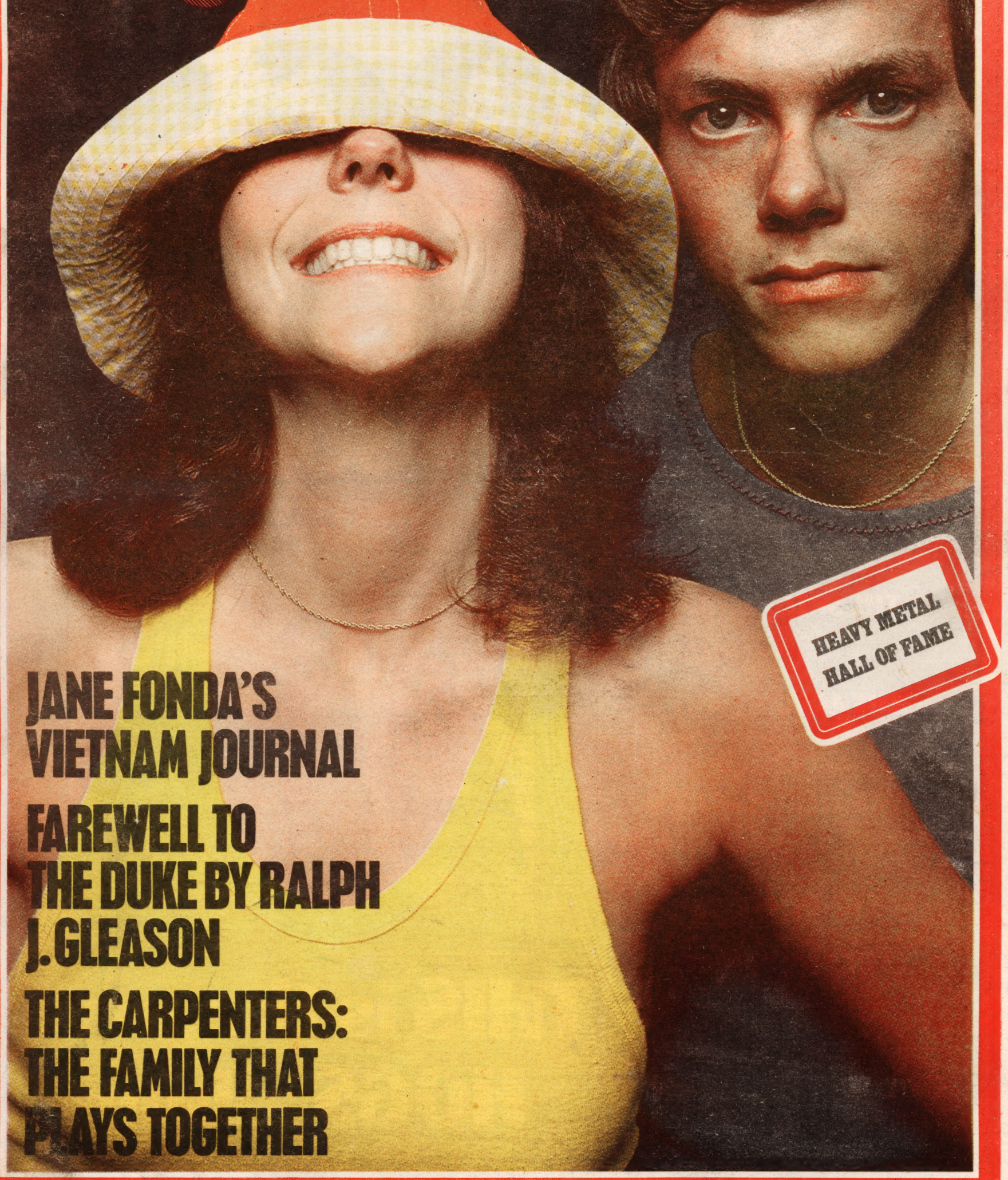

HEAVY METAL HALL OF FAME

JANE FONDA'S VIETNAM JOURNAL

FAREWELL TO THE DUKE BY RALPH J. GLEASON

THE CARPENTERS: THE FAMILY THAT PLAYS TOGETHER

FEAR AND LOATHING IN WASHINGTON

IT WAS A NICE PLACE. THEY WERE PRINCIPLED PEOPLE, GENERALLY.*

BY HUNTER S. THOMPSON

"Mr. McGovern described the president personally as a 'blob out there' 'of no constant principle except opportunism and political manipulation,' a man 'up to his ears in political sabotage,' who was 'afraid of the people' and regularly favored the 'powerful and greedy' over the public interest. The president's defense programs were 'madness'; he had 'degraded the Supreme Court' and, on three occasions at least, Mr. McGovern drew parallels between the president and his government and Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Reich. As for the Nixon administration, it was the 'most morally bankrupt, the most morally corrupt, the trickiest, most deceitful . . . in our entire national history.' "

—White House speechwriter Patrick J. Buchanan, in "The New York Times," November 24th, 1972.

"The tragedy of all this is that George McGovern, for all his mistakes and all his imprecise talk about 'new politics' and 'honesty in government' is one of the few men who've run for president of the United States in this century who really understands what a fantastic monument to all the best instincts of the human race this country might have been, if we could have kept it out of the hands of greedy little hustlers like Richard Nixon. McGovern made some stupid mistakes, but in context they seem almost frivolous compared to the things Richard Nixon does every day of his life, on purpose, as a matter of policy and a perfect expression of everything he stands for. Jesus! Where will it end? How low do you have to stoop in this country to be president?"

—Rolling Stone correspondent Hunter S. Thompson, writing on the Nixon-McGovern campaign, September 1972.

" 'When I am attacked,' Richard Nixon once remarked to this writer, 'it is my instinct to strike back.' The president is now clearly in a mood to obey his instincts . . . So on Wednesday, July 18th, at a White House meeting, it was agreed unanimously that the tapes should not be released. This decision, to use the sports cliches to which the president is addicted, meant an entirely new ball game, requiring a new game plan. The new game plan calls for a strategy of striking back, in accord with the presidential instinct, rather than a policy of attempted accommodation . . ."

—columnist Stewart Alsop, "Newsweek," August 6th, 1973.

"The Third Reich, which was born on January 30th, 1933, Hitler boasted would endure for a thousand years, and in Nazi parlance it was often referred to as 'The Thousand Year Reich.' It lasted 12 years and four months . . ."

—author William Shirer, from "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich."

For reasons that will never be clear to anyone — and especially not to the management and other guests in this place — the National Affairs Desk is operating once again at the Royal Biscayne Hotel, about 900 crooked meters from the Nixon/Rebozo compound on the other side of the island. The desk itself is a round slab of what appears to be low-grade jacaranda wood.

The centerpiece is a bright orange electric typewriter that I rented several days ago from a business-machine store on 125th Street in North Miami. It is a Swedish "Facit" — a deceptively sharp-looking machine about five times slower in both directions than the IBM Selectric and totally useless for any kind of speed-lashed gonzo work. For all its style and voltage, the Facit is about as quick in the hands as one of those 1929-model Underwoods that used to be standard equipment in the city room of the *New York Mirror*. Nobody knows exactly what happened to all those old Underwoods when the *Mirror* died of bad age, but one rumor in the trade says they were snapped up at a dime on the dollar by Norman Cousins and then resold at a tidy profit to the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Which is interesting, but it is not the kind of thing you normally want to develop fully in your classic Pyramid Lead . . . and that's what I was trying to deal with, when I suddenly realized that my typewriter was as worthless as tits on a boar hog.

Besides that, there were other mechanical problems: no water, no ice, no phone service, and finally the discovery of two Secret Service men in the room right next to me.

I was getting a little paranoid about the phone

*Quote from Robert C. Odle, office administrator for CREEP.

situation. It followed a series of unsettling events that caused me to think seriously about going back to Washington when Nixon left the next day, rather than staying on in order to open a special account in Bebe Rebozo's bank over in the shopping center across Ocean Drive. The Key Biscayne Bank seems like as good a place as any to do business, primarily because of the unusual investment opportunities available to special clients.

I have applied for "special" status, but recent developments have made me less than optimistic. Several days ago, on my first visit to the Nixon compound, I got no further than the heavily guarded gatehouse on Harbor Drive. "Are they expecting you?" the state trooper asked me.

"Probably not," I said. "I thought I'd just drop by for a drink or two, then have a look around. I've never seen the place, you know. What goes on in there?"

The trooper seemed to stiffen. His eyes narrowed and he stared intently at the black coral fist hanging on a chain around my neck. "Say . . . ah . . . I'd like to see your identification, fella. You carrying any?"

"Of course," I said. "But it's out there in the car. I don't have any pockets in these trunks." I walked across the hot asphalt road, feeling my bare feet stick to the tar with every step, and vaulted into the big bronze convertible without opening the door. Looking back at the gatehouse, I noticed that the trooper had been joined by two gentlemen in dark business suits with wires coming out of their ears. They were all waiting for me to come back with my wallet.

To hell with this, I thought, suddenly starting the engine. I waved to the trooper. "It's not here," I shouted. "I guess I left it back at the hotel." Without waiting for an answer, I eased the car into gear and drove off very slowly.

Almost immediately, the big railroad-crossing-style gate across Nixon's road swung up in the air and a blue Ford sedan rolled out. I slowed down even more, thinking he was going to pull me over to the side, but instead he stayed about 100 feet behind me — all the way to the hotel, into the parking lot, and around the back almost into the slot behind my room. I got out, thinking he was going to pull up right behind me for a chat — but he stopped about 50 feet away, backed up, and drove away.

Later that afternoon, sitting in the temporary White House press room outside the Four Ambassadors Hotel in downtown Miami about 10 miles away, I told *New York Times* correspondent Anthony Ripley about the incident. "I really expected the bastard to follow me right into my room."

Ripley laughed. "That's probably where he is right now — with about three of his friends, going through all your luggage."

Which may have been true. Anybody who spends much time around the Secret Service and acts a little bent has to assume things like that . . . especially when you discover, by sheer accident, that the room right next to yours is occupied by two S.S. agents.

That was the second unsettling incident. The details are vaguely interesting, but I'd prefer not to go into them at this point — except to say that I thought I was becoming dangerously paranoid until I got hold of a carbon copy of their room-registration receipt. Which made me feel a little better about my own mental health, at least. It is far better to *know* the Secret Service is keeping an eye on you than to suspect it all the time without ever being sure.

It was the third incident, however, that caused me to start thinking about moving the Desk back to Washington at once. I was awakened in the early hours of the morning by a telephone call and a strange voice saying, "The president is going to church. You'll have to hurry if you want to catch him."

What? My mind was blank. What president? Why should I want to *catch* him? Especially in a church?

"Who the hell *is* this?" I said finally.

"Tony," said the voice.

I was reaching around in the darkness for a light switch. For a moment I thought I was still in Mexico. Then I found a light switch and recognized the familiar surroundings of the National Affairs Suite. Jesus! I thought. Of course! Key Biscayne. President Nixon. It all made sense now: The bastards were setting me up for a bust on some kind of bogus assassination attempt. The agents next door have probably already planted a high-powered rifle in the trunk of my car, and now they're trying to lure me over to some church where they can grab me in front of all the press cameras as soon as I drive up and park. They they'll "find" the rifle in the trunk about two minutes before Nixon arrives to worship — and that'll be it for me. I could already see the headlines: NIXON ASSASSINATION PLOT FOILED; SHARPSHOOTER SEIZED AT KEY BISCAYNE CHURCH. Along with front-page photos of state troopers examining the rifle, me in handcuffs, Nixon smiling bravely at the cameras . . .

The whole scene flashed through my head in milliseconds; the voice on the phone was yelling something at me. Panic fused my brain. No! I thought. Never in hell.

"You crazy son of a bitch!" I yelled into the phone. "I'm not going near that goddamn church!" Then I hung up and went instantly back to sleep.

Later that afternoon, Ripley stopped by the hotel and we had a few beers out by the beach-bar. "Jesus Christ!" he said. "You were really out of your mind this morning, weren't you?"

"What?"

He laughed. "Yeah. You *screamed* at me. Hell, I just thought you might like to catch the scene over at Nixon's church."

"For Christ's sake don't call me with any more tips for a while."

"Don't worry," he replied. "We're leaving today, anyway. Will you be on the plane?"

"No," I said. "I'm going to sleep for two days, then take a boat back to Washington. This has not been a good trip for me. I think I'll give up covering Nixon for a while — at least until I can whip this drinking problem."

"Maybe what you should do is get into a different line of work, or have yourself committed."

"No," I said. "I think I'll get a job teaching journalism."

In the context of journalism, here, we are dealing with a new kind of "lead" — the Symbiotic Trapezoid Quote. The *Columbia Journalism Review* will never sanction it; at least not until the current editor dies of brain syphilis, and probably not even then.

What?

Do we have a libel suit on our hands?

Probably not, I think, because nobody in his right mind would take a thing like that seriously — and especially not that gang of senile hags who run the *Columbia Journalism Review*, who have gone to considerable lengths in every issue during the past year or so to stress, very heavily, that *nothing* I say should be taken seriously.

"Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." George Bernard Shaw said that, for good or ill, and I only mention it here because I'm getting goddamn tired of being screeched at by waterheads. Professors are a sour lot, in general, but professors of journalism are especially rancid in their outlook because they have to wake up every morning and be reminded once again of a world they'll never know.

THUMP! Against the door. Another goddamn newspaper, another cruel accusation. THUMP! Day after day, it never ends. . . . Hiss at the alarm clock, suck up the headlines along with a beaker of warm Drano, then off to the morning class. . . . To teach Journalism: Circulation, Distribution, Headline Counting and the classical Pyramid Lead.

Jesus, let's not forget that last one. Mastery of the Pyramid Lead has sustained more lame yoyos than either Congress or the Peacetime Army. Five generations of American journalists have clung to that petrified tit, and when the deal went down in 1972 their ranks were so solid that 71% of the newspapers in this country endorsed Richard Nixon for a second term in the White House.

Now, 18 months later, the journalistic establishment that speaks for Nixon's erstwhile "silent majority" has turned on him with a wild-eyed, coast-to-coast venom rarely witnessed in the American newspaper trade. The only recent example that comes to mind is Nixon's own blundering pronouncement of Charles Manson's guilt while Manson was still on trial in Los Angeles.

In addition to introducing the Symbiotic Trapezoid Quote as the wave of the future in journalism, I have some other ideas to get into: mainly about Richard Nixon, and some of these are ugly . . . or ugly by my standards, at any rate, because most of them revolve around the very distinct possibility that Nixon might survive his Seventh Crisis — and in surviving leave us a legacy of failure, shame and corruption beyond anything conceivable right now.

This is a grim thing to say, or even think, in the current atmosphere of self-congratulation and renewed professional pride that understandably pervades the press & politics circuit these days. Not only in Washington, but all over the country wherever you find people who are seriously concerned with the health and life expectancy of the American Political System.

The baseline is always the same: "We almost blew it," they say, "but somehow we pulled back from the brink." Names like Sirica, Woodward, Bernstein, Cox, Richardson, Ruckelshaus are mentioned almost reverently in these conversations, but anybody who's been personally involved in "the Watergate affair" and all its nasty sidebars for any length of time knows that these were only the point men — invaluable for their balls and their instincts and their understanding of what they were doing in that never-ending blizzard of Crucial Moments when a single cop-out might have brought the whole scene down on top of them all. But there were literally hundreds, maybe thousands, of others who came up to those same kinds of moments and said, "Well, I wasn't really planning on this, but if that's the way it is, let's get it on."

There are a lot of people in this country — editors, congressmen and lawyers among others — who like themselves a lot better today for the way they reacted when the Watergate octopus got hold of them.

There are also a lot of people who got dragged down forever by it — which is probably just as well, for the rest of us, because many of them were exposed as either dangerous bunglers, ruthless swine or both. Others — many of them peripherally involved in one aspect or another of "Watergate" but lucky enough not to get caught — will probably be haunted by a sense of nervous guilt for a while, but in a year or two they will forget all about it. These, in a way, are almost as dangerous as the ones who are going to jail — because they are the "good germans" among us, the ones who made it all possible.

I've been trying to finish *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* for at least the last three months; hauling the huge bugger along in my baggage to places like Buffalo, Oakland, Ann Arbor, Houston, and finally all the way down to the jungles and lost fishing villages of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. . . .

But things have been happening too fast, and there was never enough time or privacy to get seriously into the thing — not even down in the Yucatan, lying around in big hammocks in 50-peso-a-night hotels where we had to keep the Hong Kong-built ceiling fans cranked up to top speed for enough wind in the room to drive the roaches back into the corners.

At one point, I tried to read it in a hotel room near the ruins of the Mayan civilization at Chichen Itza — thinking to get a certain, weird perspective on American politics in the Seventies by pondering the collapse of "The Thousand Year Reich" while sitting on the stone remnants of another and totally different culture that survived for *more* than a thousand years before anybody in Europe even knew that a place called "America" existed. The Aztec socio-political structure was a fine-tuned elitest democracy that would have embarrassed everybody connected with either the French or American revolutions.

The ancient Greeks and Romans seem like crude punks compared to what the Mayans, Aztecs and Incas put together in Mexico and South America in the 20 or so centuries between 500 BC and the ill-fated "Spanish Conquest" in 1525. The Mayan calendar, devised several centuries before the birth of Christ, is still more precise than the one we use today: They had the solar year broken down to exactly 365.24 days, and 12 lunar months of 29.5 days each. None of this sloppy "leap year" business, or odd-numbered months.

According to most military experts, Adolph Hitler went over the hump somewhere around the middle of 1942. At that point — even according to Albert Speer, his personal architect and all-round technical wizard — the Reich was spread too thin: militarily, financially, industrially, politically and every other way. Speer had all the blueprints, the plans, the figures, and an almost daily fix on what was happening to boiling Hitler's head. Given all that, Speer says, he knew in his heart they were headed downhill after the summer of '42.

But it was almost three years and at least three million deaths later that Hitler finally admitted what Speer, one of his closest "friends" and advisers, says he knew all along — or at least during those last three years when Albert and all the others in the Fuhrer's inner circle were working 20, 22 and sometimes 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to keep the Reich propped up on an ever-eroding base of conquered slave labor and frenzied schemes to create a "super-weapon" that would somehow turn the tide.

—*Continued*

WHEN STALIN CALMED DOWN A BIT, ONE OF HIS ADVISERS SUGGESTED THAT A MASS CRUCIFIXION OF RUSSIAN CATHOLICS—FOR NO REASON AT ALL—WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY RAISE HACKLES IN THE VATICAN AND NO DOUBT ANGER THE POPE. 'FUCK THE POPE,' STALIN MUMBLED. 'HOW MANY DIVISIONS DOES HE HAVE?'

Continued

None of this rotten madness worked out, of course, and as a reward for his stupid loyalty to Hitler, Albert Speer spent 20 years of his life locked up in Spandau Prison as one of Germany's major war criminals. Hitler was consistent to the end. He had no stomach for jail cells or courtrooms — unless they were *his* — so as soon as he got word that Russo-American tanks were rumbling into the suburbs of Berlin, he went down in his private bunker and killed both himself and his faithful mistress, Eva Braun, with what some people say was a very elegant, gold-plated Walther machine-pistol.

Nobody knows for sure, because the bunker was ravaged by fire soon afterward . . . and the only alleged witness to Hitler's death was his personal aide and adviser, Martin Bormann, who either escaped at the last moment or was burned to such an unrecognizable cinder that his body was never found.

Everybody who knew Bormann hated and feared him — even Hitler, who apparently treated him like a pet cobra — and few of the Reich's survivors ever accepted the fact of his death in that fiery bunker. He was too evil and crafty for that, they insisted, and the general assumption was that Bormann had kept his personal escape plan finely organized, on a day-to-day basis, since the winter of '43.

West German military intelligence now lists him as officially dead, but not many people believe it — because he keeps turning up, now and then, in places like Asuncion, Paraguay, the Brazilian Matto Grosso, or high in the Argentine lake country.

Bormann was the Tex Colson of his time, and his strange relationship with Hitler seems not much different from the paranoid fragments of the Nixon-Colson relationship that emerged from the now-infamous "White House Transcripts" of April 1974.

We are drifting into some ugly parallels here, and if I'd written this kind of thing two years ago I'd have expected to pick up *The New York Times* a week later and see myself mangled all over the Op-Ed page by Pat Buchanan, and then beaten into a bloody coma the next evening by some of Colson's hired thugs in an alley behind the National Press Building — a long stone's throw, as it were, from the White House.

But like Tommy Rush says, "Times ain't now, but like they used to be. . . ."

Which is true. There is not much doubt about that. But after watching the TV news on all three networks last night and then reading all the Nixon stories in today's *Washington Post,* I have an eerie feeling that the times ain't now quite like they appear to be, either.

There was something oddly hollow and out of focus about last night's main TV-news story on the U.S. Supreme Court's dramatic and potentially ominous decision to postpone its traditional June recess and stay on through July to render what will clearly be an historic judgment, one way or another, on Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski's either bold or desperate leapfrog attempt to force an immediate High Court decision on President Nixon's right to ignore a subpoena — for 64 tape recordings and other White House documents — from a special prosecutor appointed under extremely sensitive circumstances by the U.S. Senate with his independence explicitly guaranteed by the new U.S. attorney general as a condition of his taking office.

All three networks treated this latest development in The Strange and Terrible Saga of Richard Nixon as a staggering and perhaps even fatal blow to his chances of survival in the White House. The mere fact that the Court was willing to stay over and hear Jaworski's argument, they implied, was a sure sign that at least four of the justices (enough, in this case) were prepared to rule, just as soon as the question is formally presented, *against* Nixon's claim of "executive privilege" with regard to Jaworski's subpoena. The special prosecutor had apparently won a major victory, and the president was in very deep trouble. Only David Schoumacher on ABC hinted, very briefly, that there had been no victory celebrations among Jaworski's staff people that afternoon. But he didn't say why. . . .

And, frankly, I'll be fucked if I can either. I brooded on it for a while, but all that came to mind was some half-remembered snarl from the lips of President Andrew Jackson when the Supreme Court ruled against him on some kind of question involving a federal land grant to the Seminole Indians. Jackson, a veteran Indian-fighter, took the ruling as a personal insult. "Well," he said, "the judges have made their decision — now let them enforce it."

Josef Stalin, about 100 years later, had similar views with regard to the Roman Catholic Church. He had gone into one of his rages, according to the story as I heard it, and this one had something to do with a notion that seized him, after five days and nights in a brutal vodka orgy, that every Catholic in Moscow should be nailed up on a telephone pole by dawn on Easter Sunday. This announcement caused genuine fear in the Kremlin, because Stalin — like Colson — was known by his staff to be "capable of almost anything." When he calmed down a bit, one of his advisers suggested that a mass crucifixion of Russian Catholics — for no reason at all — would almost certainly raise hackles in the Vatican and no doubt anger the pope.

"Fuck the pope," Stalin mumbled. "How many divisions does he have?"

These stories are hard to nail down with any real certainty, but there is a mean kind of consistency in the punch lines that makes them hard to forget . . . especially when you start pondering the spectacle of a borderline psychotic with the brain of a small-time chiseler and the power to literally blow up the world never more than 60 seconds away from his gnawed-red fingertips, doing everything he can to force a hellish confrontation with the highest judicial and legislative authorities in his own country.

This is what Nixon has been trying to do for at least the past three months — and, if Stewart Alsop was right, since July 18th of last year. That was the Wednesday meeting at the White House, he said, when "it was agreed unanimously that the tapes should not be released."

I would like to have talked with Stewart Alsop about that meeting, but he died last month of leukemia — after writing very candidly and even casually, at times, about his impending death from a disease that he had known for at least two years was slowly and steadily killing him. I didn't know him personally and as a journalist I rarely agreed with him, but there was an uncommon sense of integrity and personal commitment in everything he wrote . . . and an incredible sense of style, strength and courage in the way he chose to die.

Stewart Alsop, for all his experience in politics and all his friends in every eyrie in Washington, seemed baffled all the way to his grave by the reality of "Watergate" and its foul implications for some of the ideas and people he believed in. As one of Washington's ranking journalists, he was privy to things like that meeting last July in the White House, where Nixon and a handful of others sat down and gave serious thought to all their possible options with regard to those reels of harmless looking celluloid that had suddenly turned into time bombs. Alsop could understand all the *facts* of a scene like that, but not the Reality. Like most of the people he grew up with, Stewart Alsop was *born* a Republican.

It was as much a way of life as a thought-out political philosophy, and along with all the privileges came a certain sense of noblesse oblige.

Alsop *understood* these things — which explains probably better than anything else why it was almost genetically impossible for him to come to grips with the idea that the Oval Office of the White House — under a second-term Republican president who had also been a Republican vice-president, senator and congressman — was in fact a den of thieves, fixers and felons.

This kind of savage reality was too much for 60-year-old elitist Republicans like Stewart Alsop to cope with. It was like showing up at the White House for your monthly chat with The President on some normal afternoon and finding the Oval Office full of drunken Hell's Angels . . . and The President so stoned on reds that he can't even recognize you, babbling distractedly and shoveling big mounds of white powder around on his desk with the butt of a sawed-off shotgun.

There are not many senior political columnists in Washington who could handle a scene like that. Their minds would refuse to accept it . . . for the same reason they still can't accept the stark and fearful truth that President Richard Milhous Nixon is not only going to be impeached, but he actually *wants* to be impeached. Immediately.

This is probably the one simple fact, right now, in a story that is going to become so heinously complicated in the next few months that every reporter assigned to it will need both a shrewd criminal lawyer and scholar in the field of constitutional law right next to him or her at all times.

There is no question at all — even now, in these last moments of calm before the shittrain starts — that this "Nixon impeachment" saga is going to turn some of the best minds in American journalism to mush before it's over. . . .

And that statement will just have to sit there; I refuse to even try to explain it. There will be plenty of time for that; thousands of hours in God only knows how many courtrooms. And Nixon will eventually be impeached, if only because he has the leverage to put the House of Representatives in a position where it will have no other choice.

Nixon's lawyers — who have already cost the taxpayers nearly $400,000 in legal fees — have now abandoned all pretense in their efforts to insult and provoke Congressman Peter Rodino's House Judiciary Committee into exactly the kind of quick, angry and ill-considered vote *for* impeachment that Rodino and committee counsels John Doar and Albert Jenner have been bending over backward to avoid . . . until they can put together enough evidence — before the hearings are opened to the public and the full House convenes on TV to hear the charges — to build a far more solid and serious case for impeachment than the one they appear to have now. Nixon would like nothing better than to stampede the House of Representatives into a televised Yea or Nay showdown, based on charges no more serious than Contempt of Congress,

— Continued

TEX COLSON, ONE OF THE MOST UNPRINCIPLED THUGS IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN POLITICS, WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A MAIN LINK IN THAT UNBREAKABLE AND FATALLY INTERDEPENDENT CIRCLE—ALONG WITH HALDEMAN, EHRLICHMAN AND NIXON—WHO WOULDN'T THINK TWICE ABOUT STONEWALLING GOD HIMSELF.

Continued

Contempt of Court(s) and, by implication, the grossest kind of contempt for everybody in the country with an I.Q. higher than 50.

But not even Ron Ziegler is counting on a farce of that magnitude. On May 27th, the UPI wire carried an official statement by Ziegler, from Key Biscayne, to the effect that formal impeachment proceedings against The Boss would "come as no surprise" to him. Nor would impeachment itself, he implied. So why don't they just get on with it?

Why indeed?

One of the main reasons has to do with all those tapes that Nixon apparently decided quite a while ago that he would never turn over to anybody, anywhere, for any reason at all. Thus far, he has shrugged off subpoenas for more than 100 of his taped conversations — 64 from Jaworski and about 50 from the Rodino committee. Many of these are overlapping, and nobody in Washington seems to know which set of subpoenas would have legal preference — or even who will have to decide that question, if it ever comes up in real life.

If Nixon hangs tough on his "stonewalling" strategy with regard to the tapes, not even a definitive ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court can force him to give them up. Noncompliance would put him in contempt of the highest court in the land and constitute further grounds for impeachment — but why should that worry him? The Court has no more divisions than the pope did in Stalin's time — and no more real power over Nixon than it did over Andrew Jackson.

It is hard to imagine Chief Justice Burger signing a "no-knock" search warrant and sending a squad of U.S. marshals over to the White House with instructions to kick down the door and tear the place apart until they "find those goddamn tapes."

Special Prosecutor Jaworski is aware of all this, but it doesn't seem to bother him. He wants a ruling from the High Court, anyway, and before the end of July he will have one. It may not make any tangible difference, in the end, but at the very least it will be one more nail in Nixon's plastic coffin . . . and another piece of sharp, hard-nosed legal work by Jaworski, who must be feeling about nine feet tall today — after replacing Archibald Cox in a cloud of almost universal scorn and suspicion that he was nothing but a hired fixer brought in by Nixon and Connally to "put the cap on the bottle."

Jaworski was a definite sleeper, or at least that's the way it looks from outside his amazingly leakless operation. If he's a Nixon-Connally fixer, he's been pretty clever about it so far and he's fooled a lot of people, including some of the most cynical heads in Washington.

But not all. There are still some people around town who remind you that Houston, Jaworski's home, is a breeding ground for some of the most vicious golf-hustlers in the country — the kind who will lose the first 15 holes to you for $100 each, then whack you for $5000 a hole on the last three.

Which may be true. But if it is, Leon is cutting his margin pretty thin; he will have to play his last three holes all at once on July 8th, when he argues his tape subpoena case in front of what Washington lawyers call a "bobtailed" U.S. Supreme Court.

Justice William Rehnquist, the fourth and most virulently conservative of the four Nixon appointees, has been either pressured or cajoled by the others to remove himself from the case because of his previous association with the Nixon administration. Rehnquist was an assistant attorney general in John Mitchell's Justice Department before Nixon picked him up by his jackboots and hoisted him onto the Court.

This leaves an interesting line-up to decide the (legal) fate of the tapes: The three right-bent Nixon appointees — Burger, Blackmun and Powell — to balance the three-man "liberal bloc": Douglas, Marshall and Brennan. The two critical swing votes will be Byron White, a closet-fascist appointed by John Kennedy and Eisenhower nominee Potter Stewart, a sort of libertarian conservative who recently shocked many of his friends and philosophical brethren by publicly denouncing Nixon's blatant "politicalization" of the Court.

Stewart, far more than White, seems genuinely and even personally offended at finding himself grouped with what he plainly considers four half-bright political hacks who don't know the law from a leach-field. If Jaworski can mount a sound enough legal argument to convince Stewart that Nixon has no basic or inalienable right to withhold the tapes, he will probably win the case even if White goes along once again with Nixon's gunsels. Because there will only be three of them, this time — with Rehnquist brooding darkly on the sidelines — and in the case of a 4-4 tie, if Jaworski wins. He has already won a verdict on essentially the same question in the U.S. Court of Appeals, and when a lower court verdict is carried up as high as it can go and results in a tie vote, the lower court verdict stands.

Whatever the verdict, it will almost certainly come before the House of Representatives votes on impeachment . . . and if Nixon loses and then decides to defy the Supreme Court, that will give many of the publicly "undecided" congressmen a hard nudge in the direction of voting against him. The final vote will probably come sometime in late August, and if I had to bet on the outcome now I'd guess the margin will be almost 2-1 against the president, although a simple majority would do it.

Nixon would probably agree with me on that, and also on the idea that betting on the outcome of the House impeachment vote right now is more a matter of the point spread than simple winning or losing.

The real test will come in the Senate, where Nixon can *afford* a 2-1 point spread against him and still win the verdict. Out of 100 votes in the Senate, Nixon will need only 34 to beat the whole rap . . . which is not a really formidable nut to have to make, given the nature of politicians and the ever-increasing likelihood that the final vote in the Senate — the savage climax to "the whole enchilada" — will happen no earlier than mid-October, about two weeks before Election Day on the first Tuesday in November.

Exactly one-third of the Senate — just one vote less than Nixon needs for acquittal — will be running for reelection this November, and every one of them (either 33 or 34, because three into 100 won't go) is reportedly terrified at the prospect of having to campaign for reelection back home, while at the same time having to participate in a nationally televised trial on one of the heaviest questions in American history, and then being forced to cast a monumentally public vote either for or against President Nixon on the very eve of their own election days.

If it comes down to that, in terms of timing, the Public Opinion Polls will no doubt be a much more potent factor than they have been up to now — for the same reason that Congress waited until The Polls climbed over 50% in favor of impeachment before getting the process underway . . . and there is not much Nixon can do now to affect The Polls enough to change the House vote on impeachment.

But his ability to affect the outcome of the Senate/Conviction vote is a hard thing to argue with. For one thing, he plans to spend most of the summer flashing around Europe, Israel, Egypt, Russia and anywhere else where they'll talk to him, in what will probably be a fairly effective effort to grab enough headlines to keep "the impeachment story" at least below the fold on most front pages.

Meanwhile, the haggard remnants of his presidential staff will be working about 18 hours a day to suppress and deflate any new evidence that might affect either his standing in The Polls or the outcome of his Senate/Conviction trial. Less than half of those 34 votes he needs for acquittal are up for reelection in '74, and any incumbent president — even one who's already been impeached — has a massive amount of leverage when it comes to using the political pork barrel.

There is not much doubt, on the numbers question, that at least 20 of the 100 senators will not vote to convict Nixon under *any* circumstances . . . unless he violates that old law of Indiana politics about being "found in bed with either a live man or a dead woman."

Nixon is not one of your more vulnerable politicians in this area. It is difficult, in fact, to imagine him being in bed at all — and especially not with anything human.

So we can scratch 20 votes, for starters — which means he needs only 14 more, and we want to remember here that he'll be dealing almost entirely with Yahoo Republicans and Redneck Southern Democrats. Given the 34/66 cut, he can afford to ignore every man in the Senate who has ever been even remotely suspected of anti-Nixon sympathies . . . so he can write off at least 50 votes with one stroke, which means he will not be far off if he assumes a mathematical base of 50 votes definitely against him, 20 definitely for him, and 30 undecided.

Of those 30, he needs only 14 — and any man who has spent his entire adult life dealing on the ethical fringes of Washington politics should feel fairly comfortable with those numbers. Any president who can't piece off 14 senators would never have made it to the White House in the first place.

And Nixon has two extremely heavy hole cards: (1) He has personal control over most of the potentially fatal evidence that might be used against him if he ever comes to trial (the Oval Office tapes, which he retains the option to destroy now or later, if he hasn't already done that . . .) and (2) he has become such a personal embarrassment and political millstone around the neck of the Republican party that he could easily buy at least ten of those votes by agreeing, in secret, to resign the presidency in a gesture of splendid martyrdom within 48 hours after the Senate votes *not* to convict him on the House impeachment charges.

This solution would get a lot of people off the hook — especially Nixon, who has nothing to gain from hanging on for another two years in the White House. His effectiveness as president was a wasted hope from the very beginning — but it has taken five years, two elections and one mind-bending scandal to make the cheap little bastard understand it.

Even Nixon should understand, now, that the only hope for his salvation in the history books is to somehow become a martyr and the most obvious way to do that, at this point in the saga, is to make some kind of a deal with the heavies in his own party to get him off their backs as quickly as possible by trading the guarantee of a dignified resignation for a vote of acquit-

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tal in the Senate.

This is a pretty good bet, I think, and unless the Rodino committee comes up with some unnaturally strong evidence before the House votes on impeachment, I don't have much faith in a Senate vote for conviction. A working figure, for now, would be about 60-40 *against* Nixon . . . but 60-40 is not enough; it has to be 67-33 against, and that will be a hard nut to make.

In addition to the leverage it gives Nixon with the gurus of his own party, the "Resignation in exchange for Acquittal" strategy has a certain appeal for the Democrats — but only if it can be arranged and finished off before January 20th of 1975. If Gerald Ford assumes the presidency before that date, he will only be legally eligible to run for one more term. But if Ford becomes president anytime after January of '75, he'll be eligible for *two* terms, and most Democrats in the Senate would prefer to short-circuit that possibility.

So Nixon is not without options, when it comes down to nut-cutting time. There is very little chance that he will finish his second term, but the odds for a scenario of impeachment in the House, acquittal in the Senate and then a maudlin spectacle of martyred resignation before January 20th of next year are pretty good.

One of the very few drastic developments that could alter that timetable would be an unexpected crunch of some kind that would force Nixon to yield up his tapes. But nothing in the recent behavior of either the president or his lawyers shows any indication of that. As long as he clings to the tapes, Nixon has a very strong bargaining position vis-a-vis both the people who insist on hearing them and those few whose physical freedom depends on *nobody* hearing them.

At least a half-dozen voices on those tapes belong to people who are scheduled to go on trial, very soon, on serious felony charges . . . and they are the same ones, presumably, who attended that secret meeting in the White House, last July, when it was decided that the tapes should never be released.

It is safe to assume that there were probably some very strong and pragmatic reasons for that decision — particularly in the cases of "Bob" Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, whose fate in the courts is considered to be almost entirely dependent on Nixon's resolve to hang on to those tapes at all costs . . . Or, failing that, to destroy them if that ever seems necessary.

Nixon understands this. On the basis of his own crudely edited transcripts, there is enough evidence on those tapes to have Nixon impeached, convicted and jailed for his own protection before the first football Sunday in September. For some reason that probably not even Nixon understands now, he gave seven of these tapes to Judge Sirica last winter. Two or three of them at least were found to be unaltered originals, and Sirica eventually turned these over to the House Judiciary Committee as evidence in the impeachment inquiry.

So there are a hundred or more people wandering around Washington today who have heard "the real stuff," as they put it — and despite their professional caution when the obvious question arises, there is one reaction they all feel free to agree on: that nobody who felt shocked, depressed or angry after reading the edited White House Transcripts should ever be allowed to hear the actual tapes, except under heavy sedation or locked in the trunk of a car. Only a terminal cynic, they say, can listen for any length of time to the real stuff without feeling a compulsion to do something like drive down to the White House and throw a bag of live rats over the fence.

Yes . . . looking back at that line I just wrote, it occurs to me that almost half the people I know have been feeling that kind of compulsion almost steadily for the last eight or nine years. My friend Yail Bloor, for instance, claims to have thrown a whole garbage can full of live rats, roaches and assorted small vermin over the White House fence about a week before Lyndon Johnson announced his retirement in 1968. "It was a wonderful feeling," he says, "but only because it was Johnson. I knew, for some reason, that he would really *hate* the sight of big rats on the White House lawn." He paused and reached for his snuffbox, taking a huge hit of Dr. Johnson's best in each nostril.

"I'm not sure why," he went on, "but I wouldn't get any satisfaction out of doing a thing like that to Nixon. He might actually *like* rats."

Mother of babbling God, I just took a break from this gibberish long enough to watch the evening news . . . and there was the face and voice of Tex Colson, jolting a Washington courtroom with a totally unforeseen confession of guilt on one count of obstruction of justice in return — on the basis of an elaborately covered TV statement on the subject of his own guilt and deep involvement in almost every aspect of Watergate — for the opportunity to take whatever punishment he deserves and purge himself once and for all by "telling everything I know" about "many things I have not been able to talk freely about until now."

Colson — of all people! First he converts to Jesus, and now he's copping a plea and holding a press conference on national TV to announce that he intends to confess everything. Which means, apparently, that he is now available to testify for the prosecution in every Watergate-related trial from now until all his old friends and conspirators are either put behind bars with a Gideon Bible in their hands or standing in line at a soup kitchen in Butte, Montana.

What will Nixon make of *this* freak-out? Tex Colson, one of the most unprincipled thugs in the history of American politics, was supposed to be a main link in that unbreakable and fatally interdependent Inner Circle — along with Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Nixon — who wouldn't think twice about stonewalling God himself. Not even Richard Nixon, at the peak of his power and popularity, felt comfortable with the knowledge that a monster like Colson had an office in the White House. Nixon felt so strongly about Colson's savagery, in fact, that he went out of his way to defame him by deliberately publishing some of his own harsh judgments on Colson's total lack of *any* sense of ethics or morality in the official White House Transcripts.

And Nixon speechwriter Pat Buchanan, widely regarded as one of the most aggressive, hardline, right-wingers since Josef Goebbels, once described Colson as "the meanest man in American politics" . . . which is no small compliment, coming from Buchanan, who has spent the better part of his last decade working with some of the meanest and most congenitally fascistic bastards ever to work for *any* government.

I will have to call Buchanan tomorrow and ask him what he thinks about Tex Colson now. As a matter of fact, I will have to call a lot of people tomorrow about this thing — because if Colson really is serious about telling everything he knows, Richard Nixon is in very deep trouble. He may as well go out on Pennsylvania Avenue tomorrow and start peddling those tapes to the highest bidder, because Colson knows enough ugly stories about the Nixon regime to make most of the talk on those tapes seem like harmless cocktail gossip.

At a glance, there are two ways to view Colson's breakdown: One is to take his conversion to Jesus seriously, which is difficult . . . and the other is to take it as a warning that even the president should have better sense than to cross "the meanest man in American politics."

There is another way to interpret it, but that will have to wait for later — along with a lot of other things. This is not the kind of story to try to cope with while roaming back and forth across the country in jet airliners . . . although there is nothing in any of the current journalism out of Washington, on the tube or in print, to indicate that it is any easier to cope with there than in Key Biscayne, Calgary, or even Mexico City. The entire Washington Press Corps seems at least temporarily paralyzed by the sheer magnitude and complexity of the thing. . . .

It will be a nasty story to cover, especially in the swamp-like humidity of a Washington summer . . . but it is definitely worth watching, and perhaps even being a part of, because whatever kind of judgment and harsh reality finally emerges will be an historical landmark in the calendar of civilizations and a beacon, for good or ill, to all the generations that will inherit this earth — or whatever we leave of it — just as surely as we inherited it from the Greeks and the Romans, the Mayans and the Incas, and even from the "Thousand Year Reich."

The impeachment of Richard Nixon will end in a trial that will generate an interminable blizzard of headlines, millions-of-dollars' worth of media coverage, and a verdict that will not matter nearly as much to the defendant as it will to the jurors. By the time the trial starts — assuming that Nixon can sustain his lifelong appetite for humiliation that has never been properly gratified — the fate of Nixon himself will have shrunk to the dimensions of a freakish little side effect. The short-lived disaster of his presidency is already neutralized, and the outcome of his impeachment ordeal will have very little effect on his role in tomorrow's history texts. He will be grouped, along with presidents like Grant and Harding, as a corrupt and incompetent mockery of the American Dream he praised so long and loud in all his speeches . . . not just as a "crook," but so crooked that he required the help of a personal valet to screw his pants on every morning.

By the time Richard Milhous Nixon goes on trial in the Senate, the only reason for trying him will be to understand how he ever became president of the United States at all . . . and the real defendant, at that point, will be the American Political System.

The trial of Richard Nixon, if it happens, will amount to a *de facto* trial of the American Dream. The importance of Nixon now is *not* merely to get rid of him; that's a strictly political consideration . . . The real question is why we are being forced to impeach a president elected by the largest margin in the history of presidential elections.

So, with the need for sleep coming up very fast now, we want to look at two main considerations: 1) The necessity of actually bringing Nixon to trial, in order to understand our reality in the same way the Nuremburg trials forced Germany to confront itself . . . and 2) The absolutely vital necessity of filling the vacuum that the Nixon impeachment will leave, and the hole that will be there in 1976.